

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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FM USMISSION USBERLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3052

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 1868

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (CHANGED TO READ SECTION 1 OF 2)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, US, JA, GW, WB

SUBJECT:DEFECTON OF SOVIET MIG-25 PILOT--OLD CASE OF SOVIET CRASH

REFS: (A) STATE 221006, (B) BONN 15000 NOTAL

1. SUMMARY: WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON HANDLING OF PREVIOUS INCIDENTS DURING WHICH SOVIET OR OTHER WARSAW PACT MILITARY EQUIPMENT CAME INTO FRG HANDS. CLOSEST PARALLEL WE HAVE RECORDS ON IS CRASH OF SOPHISTICATED SOVIET MILITARY PLANE IN WEST BERLIN IN 1966. BRITISH, INTO WHOSE SECTOR PLANE CRASHED, TOOK LEAD IN FENDING OFF SOVIET DEMANDS FOR IMMEDIATE RETURN OF ALL WRECKAGE AND FOR PERMISSION FOR SOVIETS THEMSELVES TO PERFORM NECESSARY DREDGING AND RECOVERY OPERATIONS UNTIL U.. AND BRITISH INTELLIGENCE EXPERTS HAD COMPLETED THEIR INVESTIGATIONS. MAIN PART OF WRECKAGE WAS RETURNED AFTER WEEK AND ENGINES ONLY AFTER NEARLY FOUR WEEKS HAD PASSED. CERTAIN SENSITIVE RADAR AND ELECTRONIC COUNTERMEASURES EQUIPMENT WAS APPARENTLY RETAINED BY BRITISH WHO

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NONETHELESS REJECTED U.S. PROPOSALS THAT ENGINES BE FLOWN

TO UK OR US FOR MORE EXTENSIVE LABORATORY TESTS AND IF
NECESSARY NOT TURNED BACK TO SOVIETS. END SUMMARY.

2. YAK-28 FIREBAR, THEN ONE OF NEWEST AND MOST SOPHISTICATED SOVIET MILITARY PLANES, CRASHED INTO STOESSENSEE LAKE IN BRITISH SECTOR OF BERLIN AFTERNOON OF APRIL 6, 1966. BRITISH IMMEDIATELY CORDONED OFF AREA WITH THEIR TROOPS AND UTILIZED BERLIN POLICE DIVERS TO INVESTIGATE WRECKAGE WHICH WAS PARTIALLY SUBMERGED IN SOME FIVE METERS OF WATER. SOVIETS, IN VIOLATION OF FOUR POWER UNDERSTANDINGS ON MOVEMENT OF TROOPS WITHIN CITY, DISPATCHED 20 ARMED SOLDIERS FROM THEIR WAR MEMORIAL IN WEST BERLIN TO SITE AND DEMANDED THROUGH BRITISH LIAISON MISSION AT POTSDAM (BRIXMIS) THAT THEY BE ALLOWED TO CONDUCT SALVAGE OPERATIONS THEMSELVES. BRITISH RESPONDED THAT IT WAS ALLIED RESPONSIBILITY, AND IN FIRST INSTANCE BRITISH OWN RESPONSIBILITY, TO INVESTIGATE INCIDENT THOROUGHLY AND TO TAKE ALL APPROPRIATE MEASURES. US REFUSED PASSAGE INTO WEST BERLIN AT CHECKPOINT CHARLIE OF SOVIET ARMY BUS WITH 14 OFFICERS AND TWO ENLISTED MEN UNTIL SOVIETS WITHDREW ARMED SOLDIERS FROM CRASH SITE. WITHIN NEXT 24 HOURS, SOVIETS ESCALATED THEIR DEMANDS TO EMBASSY LEVEL WITH APPROACH TO BRITISH MINISTER AND TO LEVEL OF COMMANDING GENERAL SOVIET FORCES GERMANY-CHIEF OF BRIXMIS. ALLIED AIR CONTROLLERS IN TURN PROTESTED IRRESPONSIBLE SOVIET FLIGHTS OVER WEST BERLIN TO SOVIET CHIEF CONTROLLER IN BERLIN AIR SAFETY CENTER (BASC). BRITISH INSISTED THAT THEY WOULD MAINTAIN FULL CONTROL OF INVESTIGATION AND SALVAGE AND EXTENDED CORDON AROUND SITE SO AS TO MAKE SOVIET OBSERVATION OF OPERATIONS MORE DIFFICULT.

3. DIVERS DISCOVERED BODIES OF TWO CREW MEMBERS IN WRECKAGE APRIL 7, AND BRITISH TURNED REMAINS OVER TO SOVIET HONOR GUARD THAT EVENING BUT ONLY AFTER REBUFFING SOVIET DEMAND THAT CEREMONY BE HELD ABOARD SALVAGE RAFT DIRECTLY ON SITE. BRITISH CARRIED OUT SALVAGE WITH LESS THAN EXTRAORDINARY SPEED IN ORDER TO PERMIT BRITISH AND US INTELLIGENCE SPECIALISTS TO COME TO BERLIN AND EXAMINE FINDINGS. RADAR AND OTHER ELECTRONIC GEAR OF PARTICULAR SECRET

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INTEREST WAS REMOVED FROM WRECKAGE INITIALLY TO BRITISH GATOW AIR BASE IN BERLIN AND THEN TO UK. BRITISH AND US SPECIALISTS CONDUCTED EXAMINATION OF FUSELAGE AND OTHER MAJOR PORTIONS OF PLANE FROM SALVAGE RAFT WHILE FADE OF EXTENSIVE DIVING ACTIVITY WAS MAINTAINED AS COVER. BRITISH WERE PREPARED TO ADVISE SOVIETS THAT RECOVERED PORTIONS OF PLANE COULD BE RETURNED AS EARLY AS EVENING OF APRIL 8, BUT PUT THIS DATE OFF FURTHER DAY IN VIEW OF STRONG US

PRESENTATION THAT MORE TIME WAS REQUIRED FOR EXPERTS
TO COMPLETE THEIR EXAMINTION. ACTUAL TURNOVER OF
WRECKAGE WAS DELAYED UNTIL APRIL 13. WHILE SOVIETS HAGGLED
FOR FOUR DAYS INSISTING THAT BRITISH PROVIDE DETAILED
853.8"-589, -\$ &7-4-,533 5#-5 ,9 0-45
58)) 43.-8,3\$ 59 ?3 -);-&3\$. BRITISH FENDED OFF SOVIET
DEMANDS SINCE ENGINES, WHICH THEY AND WE CONSIDERED
VITAL, HAD NOT YET BEEN LOCATED.

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